

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 CU-02 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

IO-10 OMB-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 AID-05

FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 CIEP-01 AGR-05 IGA-02

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, TH

SUBJECT: THAILAND'S "GENERAL STRIKE" CONTINUES

REF: A) BANGKOK 26894; B) BANGKOK 27005; D) BANGKOK 0051

D) BANGKOK 0063

1. AFTER THREE INDECISIVE DAYS, THAILAND'S "GENERAL STRIKE"

MOVED INTO A NEW PHASE AS STRIKE LEADERS CALLED FOR A PUBLIC
RALLY IN SUPPORT OF THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S
MOVE TO INCREASE RICE
AND SUGAR PRICES. THE GOVERNMENT CON-
TINUED TO CALL ON WORKERS TO RETURN TO WORK WHILE REMINDING
WORKERS OF THE HARSHSHIP THEY WILL EXPERIENCE DUE TO LOSS OF
WAGES AND EVEN DISMISSAL FROM THEIR JOBS.

2. AFTER PROMISING NOT TO DISRUPT PUBLIC SERVICES AND NOT
TO HOLD A PUBLIC RALLY, STRIKE LEADERS SAW THEIR TACTICS
WERE DOING LITTLE TO FORCE THE GOVERNMENT TO RESCIND PLANNED
PRICE INCREASES FOR RICE AND SUGAR. IN A LENGTHY AND AT
TIMES HEATED MEETING OF STRIKE ORGANIZERS IT WAS DECIDED
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THAT THE "GENERAL STRIKE" WOULD MOVE INTO STAGE TWO WITH

A RALLY OF STRIKING WORKERS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS MONDAY AFTERNOON. APPROXIMATELY TEN THOUSAND PEOPLE GATHERED AT THE RAMA IV STATUE, NEAR THE KING'S PALACE. POLICE REPORT ONE FAITORY OWNER REFUSED TO ALLOW EMPLOYEES TO ATTEND THE RALLY UNTIL A SQUAD OF STRIKERS ARRIVED ON MOTORCYCLES TO ASSIST THE PLANT'S WORKERS. VOCATIONAL STUDENTS OPPOSED TO THE RALLY, WHILE ALSO OPPOSING THE IHPENDING PRICE INCREASES, ARE REPORTED BY POLICE TO BE RECRUITING OTHER STUDENTS FOR A COUNTER-RALLY.

3. STRIKE LEADERS BETRAY A FEELING OF UNCERTAINTY AS THEY COMPLAIN OF LACK OF SUPPORT BY SOME UNIONS, WORKERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC. THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THAI LABOR (NCTL) (REF C) STILL REFUSES TO SUPPORT THE STRIKE AND CERTAIN STATE ENTERPRISE EMPLOYEES, NOTABLY THE WATER WORKERS, HAVE REPORTED TO WORK IN NEAR NORMAL NUMBERS. LEADERS OF SOME OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE UNIONS HAVE BEGUN DISCUSSING REDUCING OR CUTTING OFF SERVICE, PRESUMABLY PHASE THREE OF THE STRIKE.

5. AN EMBASSY THAI EMPLOYEE WHO ATTENDED THIS AFTERNOON'S RALLY ESTIMATED THE CROWD AT TEN TO FIFTEEN THOUSAND. THE CROWD WAS ORDERLY AND SPEAKERS VOWED TO REMAIN UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT GAVE IN TO THEIR DEMANDS. TENTS WERE BEING ERECTED IN PREPARATION FOR A LONG STAY.

6. COMMENT: AS PHASE TWO OF THE STRIKE GETS UNDERWAY, BOTH SIDES WILL ONCE AGAIN REVIEW THEIR OPTIONS. AT THIS POINT BOTH STRIKERS AND THE GOVERNMENT SEEM INTENT ON AVOIDING VIOLENCE.
WHITEHOUSE

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